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ABSTRACT

This report presents data on school superintendent characteristics, tenure, and salaries. Data come from 1999 surveys of member cities of the Council of the Great City Schools (GCS) and from the 1997 survey and pertinent national superintendent data for comparison. Survey forms were sent to the board of education secretary in each member district. Respondents provided information on gender, race/ethnicity, salary, benefits, and bonuses for their districts' superintendents. Results indicate that the average tenure of a major city school district superintendent is now only 2 1/3 years, down from 2 3/4 years in 1997. The average tenure nationally was about 7 1/2 years for men and 5 years for women in 1997. Only 18 percent of all superintendents expressed interest in being the superintendent of a large, urban school district. The shortage problem in superintendents is also a retention problem. The data show that salaries for urban superintendents have increased over the last several years as demand has risen. The average bonus for GCS superintendents was \$11,362 in 1999. The average benefit package for GCS superintendents cost \$37,011 in 1999. Finally, the results show a great deal of diversity in the ranks of the urban superintendency.

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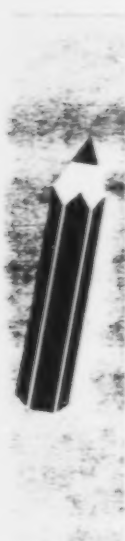


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*Council of the Great City Schools*

Urban School Superintendents: Characteristics, Tenure, and Salary



Second Biennial Survey

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Introduction & Survey Methodology

The Council of the Great City Schools surveyed its member cities in 1999 to determine the characteristics of superintendents in America's urban schools. This, our second biennial report on urban superintendents, contains the results of that survey. Results from the 1997 survey and pertinent national superintendent data are also provided as comparisons.

Survey forms were mailed and faxed to the board of education secretary in each of the member districts in July and again in December of 1999 to insure the highest response rate possible. Respondents were asked to provide information on the gender, race/ethnicity, salary, benefits, and bonus for their districts' superin-

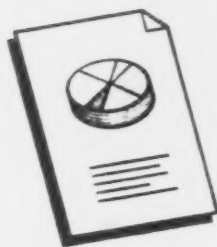
tendent as of July 1, 1999. Surveys were received from 48 out of the 57 member districts, for a response rate of 84 percent. Surveys were not received from Baltimore, Columbus, El Paso, New Orleans, Oakland, Orange County, Salt Lake City, San Antonio, and Tulsa.

Council staff determined the race/ethnicity and gender of superintendents in the non responding districts and estimated salaries on the basis of previous information. These estimates are included in this report. All data presented in this publication are reported in summary form.

Highlights

Demographics

(As of July 1, 1999)



- ◆ Some 42.1 percent of Great City School (GCS) superintendents were Black, 42.1 percent were White, and 14.0 percent were Hispanic in 1999. By contrast, 47.0 percent of GCS superintendents were Black, 37.0 percent were White and 16.0 percent were Hispanic in 1997.
- ◆ About 79.0 percent of GCS superintendents were men in 1999. Some 42.1 percent of all superintendents were White males; 24.6 percent were Black males, 10.5 percent were Hispanic males, and 1.8 percent were Native American males.
- ◆ Approximately 21.0 percent of GCS superintendents were women in 1999. Some 17.5 percent of all superintendents were Black females and 3.5 percent were Hispanic females. There were no White females in 1997 or 1999.

Tenure

- ◆ The average tenure of a Great City Schools (GCS) superintendent declined from 2 3/4 years in 1997 to 2 1/3 years in 1999.
- ◆ The majority (52%) of GCS superintendents have been in office between one and five years. This is unchanged from 1997.



♦ The average tenure for a GCS male superintendent was just over 2 ½ years in 1999; for females it was 1 ½ years. The average tenure for a male superintendent nationally was 7 ½ years in 1997; for females it was 5 years.

♦ Only 12 percent of GCS superintendents had 5 or more years in their current positions in 1999.

Salaries

- ♦ The average salary for GCS superintendents increased from \$144,775 (in constant 1999 dollars) in 1997 to \$153,337 in 1999, a real increase of 6 percent.
- ♦ The salary range for GCS superintendents was between \$106,000 and \$245,000 in 1999. The salary range was \$103,00 to 199,800 in 1997.
- ♦ The average salary for a GCS superintendent with 5 or more years experience was \$170,719 in 1999; and the average salary for a GCS superintendent with between 1 and 5 years was \$145,105.
- ♦ The average salary for a GCS superintendent in a district with less than 50,00 students was \$134,936 in 1999; in a district with between 50,00 and 100,00 students was \$149,050; in a district with between 100,000 and 200,000 students was \$175,733; and in a district with more than 200,00 students was \$196,041.
- ♦ The average salary for superintendents of school districts with 25,000 or more students nationally is estimated at \$144,260 in 1999, compared with an average of \$112,158 for districts of all sizes.

Benefits & Bonuses*

- ♦ The average annual bonus for GCS superintendents was \$11,362 in 1999.
- ♦ The range of annual bonuses or pay-for-performance provisions was between \$5,750 and \$45,000.
- ♦ Superintendent pay-for-performance bonuses ranged from 2 to 30 percent of base salary.
- ♦ Some 63 percent of GCS superintendents had benefits that included a car or mileage allowance; 42 percent had financial bonuses; 39 percent had such "other" benefits as travel allowances, membership dues, moving expenses, and communication allowances; and 4 percent had a house or apartment allowance.
- ♦ The average benefit package for GCS superintendents costs \$37,011 in 1999.



*Some 38 districts provided benefit and bonus data.

Figure 1

Number of CGCS Superintendents by Race/Ethnicity and Gender:
July 1997 and July 1999

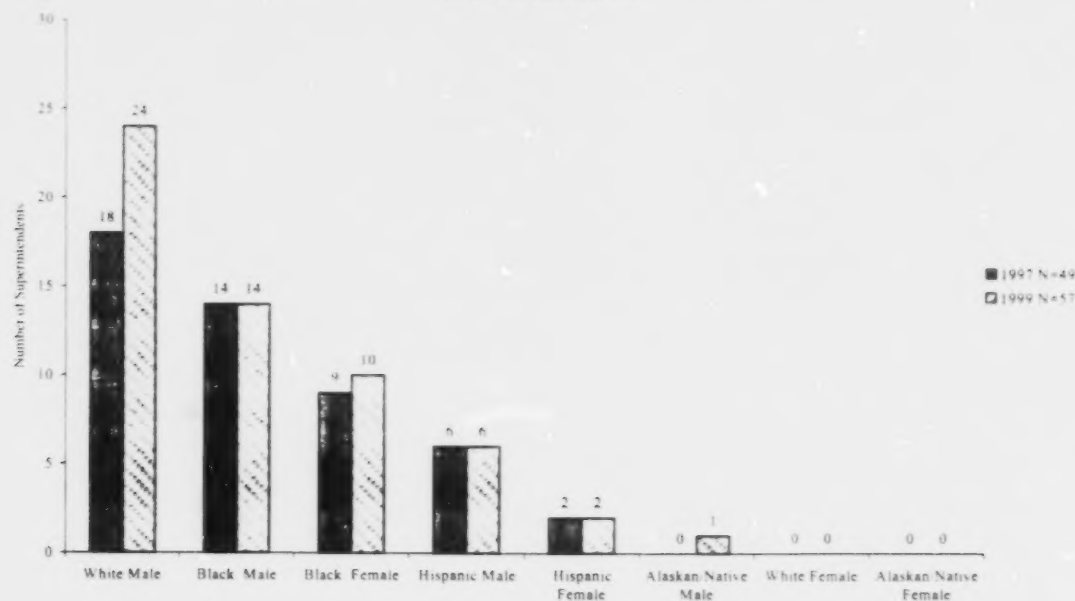


Figure 2

Percent of CGCS Superintendents by Race/Ethnicity and Gender:
July 1997 and July 1999

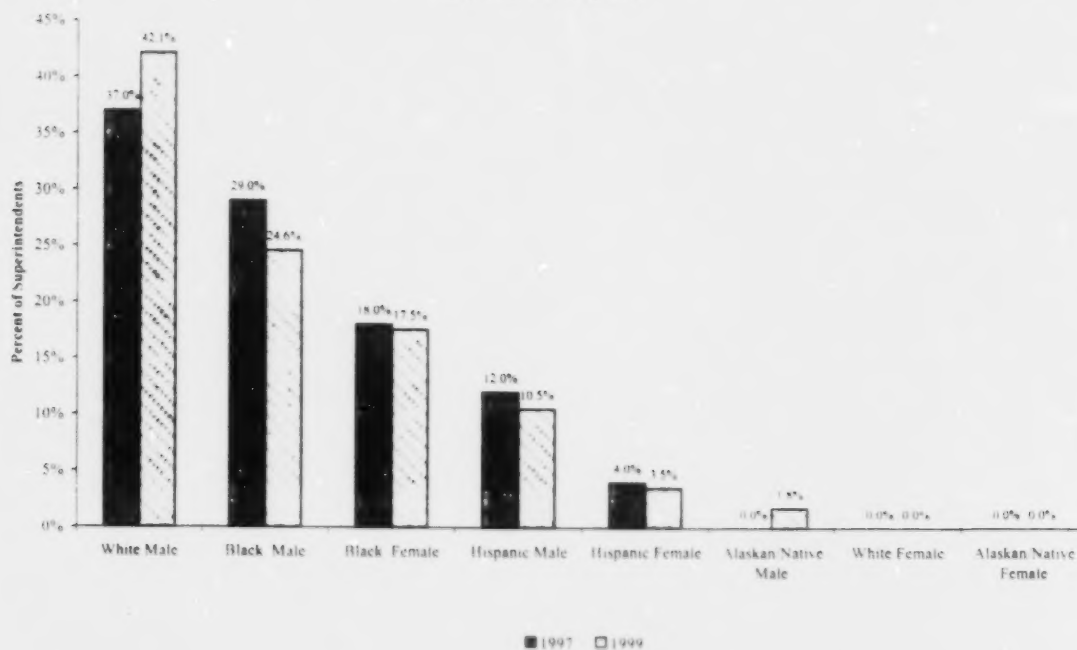


Figure 3

CGCS Superintendents by Tenure:
July 1997 and July 1999

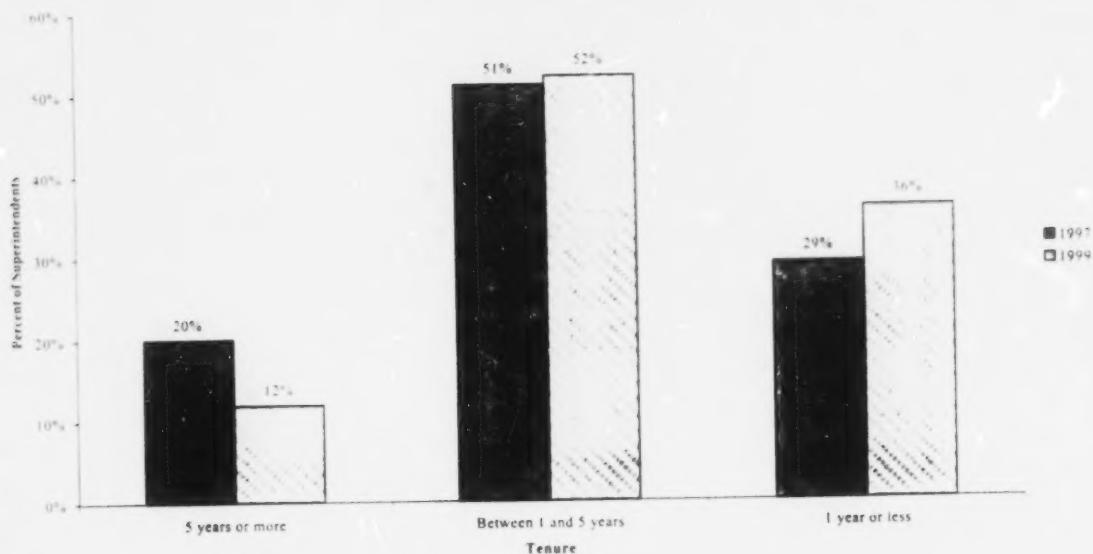


Figure 4

CGCS Superintendents Salaries by Tenure:
July 1997 and July 1999
(in constant 1999 dollars)

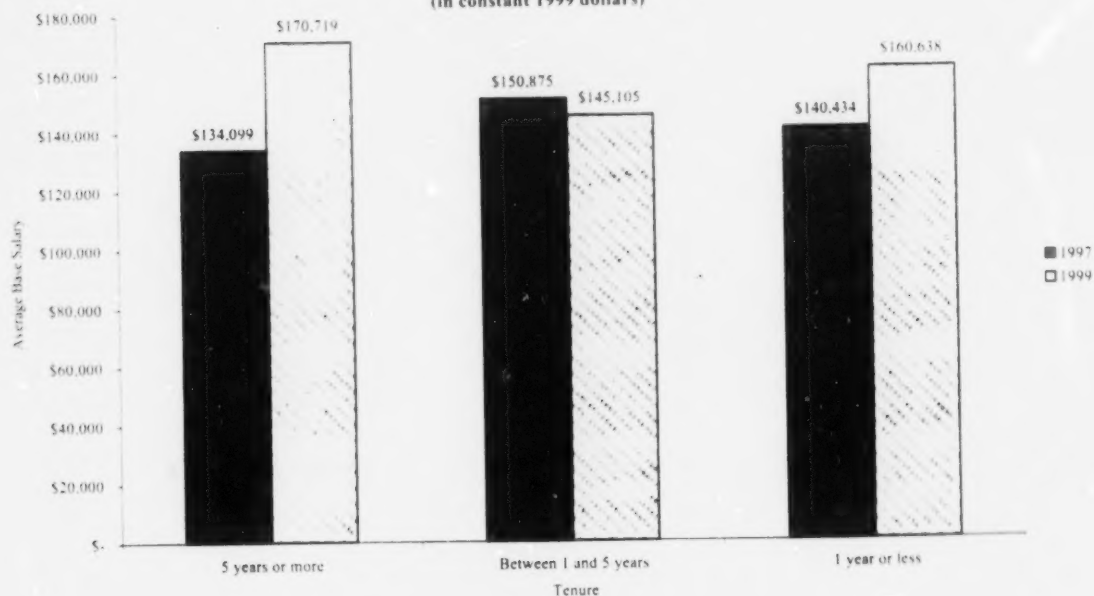


Figure 5

CGCS Superintendents Salaries by Enrollment:
July 1997 and July 1999
(in constant 1999 dollars)

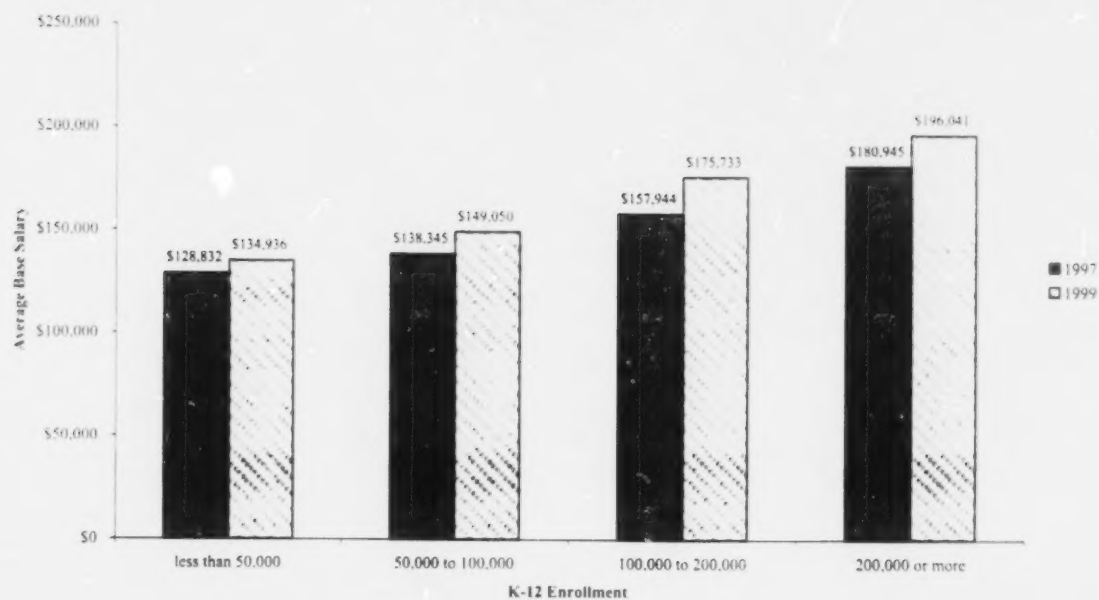


Figure 6

CGCS Superintendents by Salary Range:
July 1997 and July 1999

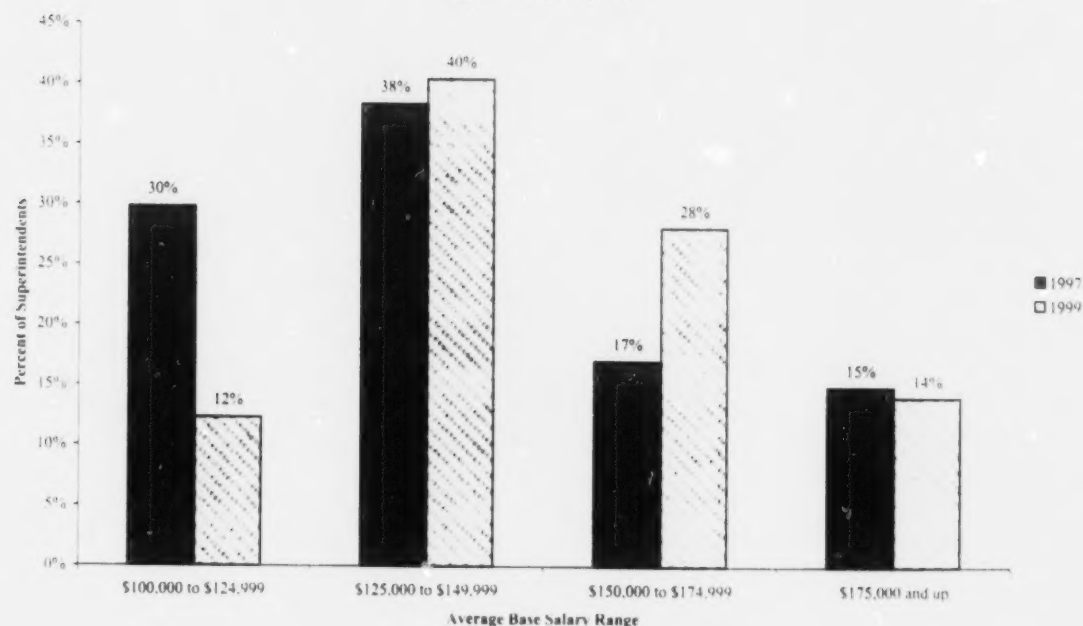
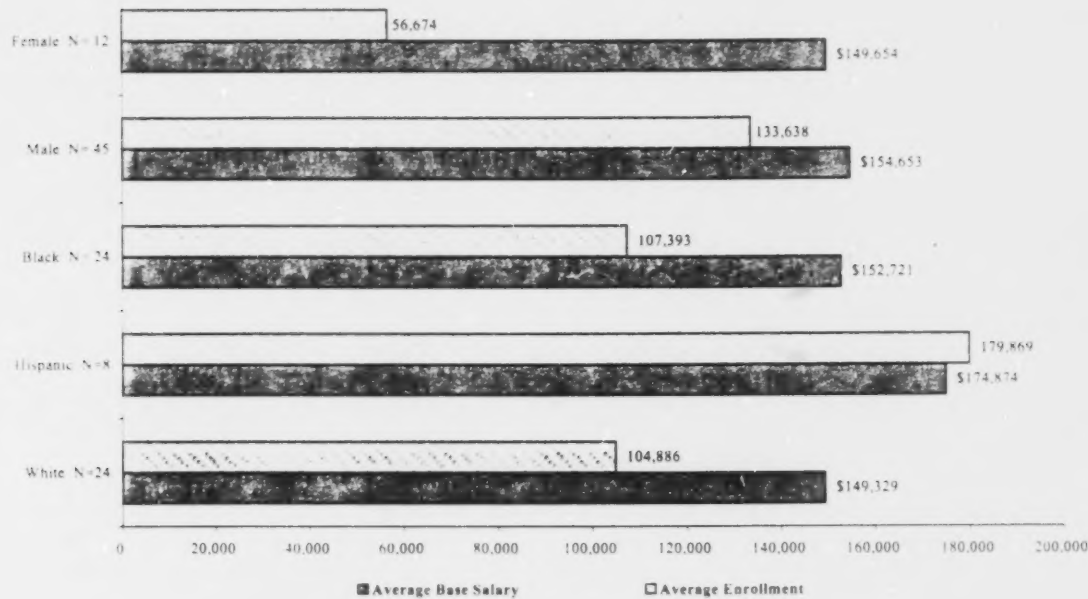


Figure 7

Ethnicity and Gender of CGCS Superintendents by Salary and K-12 Enrollment:
July 1999



Discussion

Being the superintendent of a major urban public school system is one of the toughest jobs in America. It requires a unique blend of leadership, management, instructional, political, and operational skills needed in few other jobs. It is also a job that turns over far too frequently.

The data from this report indicate that the average tenure of a major city school district superintendent is now only 2 1/3 years, down from 2 3/4 years in 1997. The average tenure nationally is about 7 years. Another re-

cent survey, moreover, found that only 18% of all superintendents expressed any interest in being the superintendent of a large urban school district (Cooper *et. al.*, 1999). The shortage problem in superintendents is also a retention problem.

This report also shows that salaries for urban superintendents have increased over the last several years as demand has risen. Finally, this survey shows a great deal of diversity in the ranks of the urban superintendency.

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- Cooper, Bruce S., Fusarelli, Lance D. & Carella, Vincent A. (1999) *Career Crisis in the School Superintendency*. New York, NY
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Urban School Superintendents: Characteristics, Tenure, and Salary

Anchorage
Atlanta
Baltimore
Birmingham
Boston
Brossard County
Buffalo
Charlotte-Mecklenburg
Chicago
Clark County
Cleveland
Columbus
Dallas
Dayton
Denver
Des Moines
Detroit
El Paso
Fort Worth

Fresno
Houston
Indianapolis
Jefferson County
Long Beach
Los Angeles
Louisville
Memphis
Mesa
Miami-Dade County
Milwaukee
Minneapolis
Nashville
New York City
Newark
Norfolk
Oakland Unified
Oklahoma City
Omaha

Orange County (FL)
Philadelphia
Pittsburgh
Portland
Providence
Richmond
Rochester
Sacramento
Salt Lake City
San Antonio
San Diego
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The Research Department of the Council of the Great City Schools publishes the *Urban Indicator*, which explores timely and pertinent issues facing urban education.

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